

Literary Notes.

BOOKS.

DOES GOD SEND TROUBLE? An earnest effort to discern between Christian tradition and Christian truth. By Charles Cuthbert Hall, D. D., minister of the First Presbyterian church of Brooklyn, N. Y. Houghton, Mifflin & Co., Boston and New York. \$1.

The Problem of Human Destiny must forever remain the most interesting of all problems, as long as a single soul is left to throb with anguish or a single heart to break, baffled and beaten by the countless ills to which humanity is heir. How shall we "justify the ways of God with men," how reconcile all the sin and sickness and suffering of this weary, hapless world, with the truth that all things are in the hands of One who is infinitely wise and powerful and good?—this is the bewildering problem which is ever new—with which each soul must, sooner or later, wrestle as for its very life, and which no solution seems to fully solve. The little monograph before us is the answer of a strong, manly soul, a true Knight of the faith, to this great question—an answer which, though it may not fully satisfy, can not fail to bring help to many despairing hearts, because of its very sincerity and its beautiful spirit of triumphant trust. When such a man as Dr. Cuthbert Hall, so gifted with sympathy and the power to comfort those who weep, writes on a subject which comes more closely home to every son and daughter of the earth than any other, as does the subject of the source of trouble, his words are sure to be widely useful. Such a book will need no critic's words to secure for it a reading, and to give such a summary of its contents as will stand him in stead who cannot read it, will be of little value—it is like substituting a skeleton for the living body, beautiful with the glow of health and quivering with the ecstasy of hope and joy. And yet we are tempted to give a few words of appreciative comment, if only we may thus induce others to share the pleasure and comfort which we have personally received from this little volume.

Dr. Hall, as introductory, makes the capital point, which lies at the very foundation of all successful attempts to comfort, that there is no such thing as a duty to receive consolation from this or that truth, however potent it may have been to comfort others. Submission is a duty—consolation is another thing. "The consolations of God are sometimes to small" for men, and that not because men are contumacious. "There are always reasons why God's consolations fail to comfort," says Dr. Hall, and it is the duty of him who would carry consolation, to seek for these reasons, though they are often very hard to find. He thinks there are two general causes underlying them all—a distorted view of God's relations to our sorrows, and a consequent distorted relation of our life to God. These two points form the basis for his treatment of the subject.

And first, it is not God, the author tells us, who sent sin (with all its consequent sufferings) and death into the world. It is not God who sweeps away our beloved in pestilence, or disaster, or by insanity, slow-wasting disease, or quick, hurrying illness. God later death as he hates sin; he does not "take away" our beloved. "The Hebrew word is clear: 'The Lord gave and the Lord hath received, blessed be his name.' " "Only once in the Bible, so far as I know, is it said of a human being,

'God took him away,' and that man was Enoch, who did not die."

Chastisement, then, has nothing to do with our calamities; it is *making chaste*, and this is done through spiritual experiences, and spiritual experiences alone. And discipline is *teaching*; it may come through joy or sorrow, holiness or sin, life or death. All our experiences are used by God in his teaching of us; out of the painful experiences he thus brings good; but the painful experiences are not of his sending, but of our transgression of natural law.

This is the ground-work of the book. Its subsequent chapters necessarily treat of the relation of God to natural law, of the historic Atonement and punishment of sin, of the will of God and the tendency of nature, of the duty, the comfort, and the power of prayer.

The author's treatment of the punishment of sin is notably strong. God does not *punish* sin in this world, punishment in no sense enters into the present dispensation, which, is altogether one of salvation, punishment being reserved for future dispensations; sin is not merely the wrong uses of right things, but a crime against God's holiness, which requires some more awful punishment than any earthly sorrow could be, and whose real nature is revealed, at least by a glimpse, in the cross of Jesus, in the secret anguish of that sacred heart, the horror and misery that rent his soul, into which if we enter, even in the slightest degree, we shall never think of calling our own woes and sorrows by that awful name, *the punishment of sin*. So awful is this, that 'His one purpose from the foundation of the world as been to redeem the world from that doom.'

"This is the sublime and solemn teaching of this book; our calamities, sufferings, bereavements, come from the transgression of natural law, but the punishment of sin comes out of God's holy life by the very necessity of His being. If this had not been borne once for all humanity by the Incarnate Son of God, to what blackness of darkness should we be shut up! But He has been through it, the world has been redeemed, it has been reconciled to Himself. And now we may indeed find consolation for all our woes, bitter, cruel, unutterable, as they are, in the love of Him who so loved us."

"There is no heart that has cruelly suffered but must own speechless gratitude to Dr. Hall for the chapter in which he shows the monstrous cruelties which have been inflicted by the perversion of that sacred prayer, 'Thy will be done,' distorted, as he truly says, into a 'Gospel of cruelty.' Here is one of the prophetic voices of which, in these latter days, thank God, we are hearing many, upraised to protest against the common religious view of 'a will of God which does violence to His character.' It is *not*, he cries with noble passion, the will of God that sickness, catastrophe, death shall come; it is the evil one that has the power of death; we are bound to fight against it by every means that science, invention, the trained intelligence can discover. The will of God is not that one of us shall suffer one pang from violent physical law. 'Thy will be done, means these things; it means the fellowship of Christ's sufferings; it means the manifestation of the grace of God; it means the courage of faith.'

When we have reached this point we may almost forecast what Dr. Hall has to say of the duty, the comfort, and the power of prayer; our will being in harmony with God's will, we desire, as He does that the afflictions which afflict us may be overpast; we may pray for their removal,

knowing that their removal and abolishment is His will. 'Prayer is as natural as love to one who so understands God's view of human woe; it is a duty, it is a comfort, it is a real and unmeasurable power, effective to accomplish as well as powerful to sustain.'—CHRISTIAN EVANGELIST.

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Our Dead.

REGAN:—In the Allison Prairie church, September the 9th, 1894, Sister Ella Regan, daughter of Ira and Rachel Calvert, born in Clearcreek township, Huntington County, Indiana, August the 5th, 1857.

She united with the German Baptist Brethren when quite young and remained faithful to the end. She leaves a husband and three small boys besides a dear mother, brothers and sisters to mourn their loss.

T. M. CALVERT.

McFADDEN:—Rachel McFadden was born June 4th 1808 and died Sep. 12th 1894, aged 86 years, 3 mo, and 8 days. She was a member of the church of God for over 62 years. She was a pioneer settler of Lattasburg, Ohio, and the oldest person in Chester township. It is said of her that there is no woman living in this part of the country, who has done more or as much for her neighbors in time of sickness and bereavement than she has. Her funeral sermon was preached in the U. B. church at Lattasburg by Wm. Kiefer, of Pleasant Home.

DITCH:—In the Roann Congregation, Wabash Co., Ind., Ross Stimel Ditch, the infant son of our esteemed Brother and Sister L. W. Ditch. Born March 2nd, 1894, died Sept. 13th, 1894; aged 6 months and 11 days. Though under the hand of affliction for some time, yet death came unexpected which made it doubly sad; yet happy infant, early blest, gone to rest. Funeral by the writer.

D. A. Hopkins.

BURNES:—In the Burne's Chapel Congregation, Fulton Co., Ind., Anna Rettie, daughter of our beloved Bro. and Sister Robert Burnes. Born August 21st, 1893, died Sept. 7th, 1894, aged 1 year and 17 days. Dear parents mourn not as those who have no hope. Funeral by the undersigned.

D. A. Hopkins.

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